

The Cherry Tree

USS George Washington (CVN 73)

Command Ombudsman Newsletter

September 2006

GW Completes Last Underway Before Yard Period

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Laura Rabe, USS George Washington Public Affairs Office

USS *George Washington* returned Sept. 1 to Naval Station Norfolk following a two-and-a-half week underway period in preparation of the upcoming Planned Incremental Availability plus Docking (PIA+D). It was the last at sea period before *GW* goes to Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

"This has been a tremendous underway, a complete success in every regard," said Rear Adm. Garry R. White, *GW*'s commanding officer. "It was a privilege to be the first ship to test out new equipment that will make up tomorrow's fleet," he commented after the first test of the digital flight control system on the EA-6B *Prowler* from Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 23 (VX-23) was tested. *GW* also served as test platform for F/A-18s, also from VX-23, testing the Joint Precision Approach and Landing System (JPALS).

The underway period allowed Damage Control Division and Deck Department to collect crew survival gear that is not necessary to be issued during PIA+D, and Weapons Department to offload ammunition that is not needed for the shipyard.

Sailors in Damage Control (DC) Division spent two days collecting chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) gear and preparing it for off loading once the ship returned to homeport, while the Deck Department collected life preservers.

"We're doing the off load packing now, so we can get an accurate count and accurate inventory of the gear we have on board," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Steve Spencer of DC Division. "We're pulling the gear out of voids and fan rooms, packing them up in tri-walls and getting ready to ship them to Texas for storage during the PIA+D."

During the underway, Weapons Department was successfully able to off load its ammunition. Sailors moved more than 600 pallets that were pre-staged on the Flight Deck and in the Hanger Bay to USNS *Mount Baker* (T-AE 34) during simultaneous connected replenishments (CONREP) and vertical replenishment (VERTREP).



"This is definitely something you don't see every day," said White, referring to the ship's underway replenishment and a fueling at sea while also conducting flight operations. "And we wouldn't do it on *GW* if I didn't have complete confidence in everyone involved – the Air Department, Operations, Bridge Team, and everyone George Washington."

"We off loaded all the ordnance so the magazines are empty," said Petty Officer 1st Class Richard Rostow, G-3 Division's leading petty officer. "The main thing was

GW Prepares For Yards With Ammo Offload

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman David Bach, USS George Washington Public Affairs

USS George Washington conducted a successful ammunition offload Aug. 17 to prepare the ship to head to Norfolk Naval Shipyard for a Docked Planned Incremental Availability (DPIA).

Sailors in GW's Weapons Department moved more than 600 pallets that were pre-staged on the Flight Deck and in the hanger bay to USNS Mount Baker (T-AE 34) during simultaneous connected replenishment (CONREP) and vertical replenishment (VERTREP).

"We're offloading all the ordnance so the magazines will be empty," said Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class (AW/SW) Richard Ristow, G-3 Division's leading petty officer. "The main thing is to get all the live ordnance off before we go to the yards, so we can do hot work without any obstacles."

The lifts consisted of bombs, missiles and small arms ammunition. To keep everyone on the ship as safe as possible, the hanger bay was secured.

"We secured the hanger bay, because we don't want any people who are not qualified and authorized to touch the ordnance, in order to prevent any mishaps from happening," Ristow said.

Lt. Dean Rodriguez, G-3's division officer, agreed, adding "We keep all personnel not directly involved out of the hanger bay. There's no reason for them to be here. It's just more traffic, somebody else to cause an accident."

Not only was keeping unnecessary personnel away from the area important, but Sailors moving ordnance especially had to pay attention to their surroundings.

"There's constant motion while we're doing the offload," Ristow said. "Sailors are driving forklifts, so you always have to have your head on a swivel."

"Every action causes a reaction," Rodriguez said. "We need to remain alert and remain vigilant."

Three weeks of detailed planning went into the preparation before pre-staging even began

The evolution was safe and fast due to pre-staging efforts by the Weapons Department in the two days

prior to the actual offload.

"We used a computer program to help determine what ordnance goes to what station, whether it should be in the hanger bay or on the Flight Deck," said Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class (AW/SW) James Kanta, G-5's leading petty officer.

"The evolution was successful and was finished hours before planned due to proper pre-planning and great efforts by



Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Ian Schoeneberg the Weapons Department and the ship as a whole," Kanta said.



GW Ombudsmen

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GW Preps for Yards With Off Loads

By Mass Communication Specialist Second Class (SW/AW) Jennifer Crowell

USS *George Washington* continues with preparations for the upcoming Docked Planned Incremental Availability (DPIA) as the Damage Control Division and Deck Department collect essential crew survival gear that is not necessary to be issued during DPIA.

Sailors in DC Division spent the last two days collecting chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) gear and preparing it for off loading once the ship returns to homeport, while Deck Department prepares to collect rubber ducks.

"DC Division is currently preparing to offload our CBR gear," said DC1(SW) James Woodard of the Locker Shop. "We're pulling the gear out of voids and fan rooms, packing them up in tri-walls and getting ready to ship them to Texas for

storage during DPIA."

"We're doing the off load packing now so we can get an accurate count and

"The gear will be craned off the ship when we get back to Norfolk," Spencer said. "The gear is then taken to a warehouse until it's shipped to Texas, where it will be inventoried and maintained."

"All of our voids have to be inspected while we're in the yards," Woodard said. "We're getting everything out now so they can go in and inspect the voids and not have any problems doing that."

Pre-staging the tri-walls while the ship is at sea will help



Mass Communication Specialist Second Class (SW/AW) Jennifer Crowell

accurate inventory of the gear we have on board," said DC2(SW) Steve Spencer of DC Division. "This way we can be prepared for what we are getting back when the ship leaves the yards to go to Japan."

Once the ship returns to Norfolk, the gear will then be taken off the ship.

eliminate any issues when *GW* returns pier side.

"We're going to DEPERM on Sept. 11," Woodard said. "Right after DEPERM we're pulling into the yards, so there will be no time between the time we get home and DEPERM to get anything accomplished."

RETURN from page 1

to get all the live ordnance off before we got into the yards. This way we'll be able to do hot work without any obstacles."

"The preparations and the off loads themselves were successful due to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in these evolutions," commented White.

Also, during the underway *GW* completed Command Assessment of Readiness and training Phase I (CART I). CART I measures the command's training programs and manning levels, particularly in specialized skill sets. It helps the command plan for deployments

by providing a picture of future manning and training levels.

The upcoming DPIA will prepare the *GW* for change of homeport to Japan, scheduled for 2008. *GW* will relieve USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) as the Navy's forward-deployed carrier in the Western Pacific.

"Everyone needs to continue the exceptionally high level of performance that has led to our success," White said. "Working together as a team made this another successful *GW* underway. As we enter the shipyards, we will continue to set the standard for excellence and let everyone know how *GW* does business."

MWR Plans Activities for Yards

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Laura L. Rabe

As USS George Washington prepares for Docked Planned Increment Availability (DPIA) 07, the Weapons and Deck Departments are not the only ones planning and organizing events. Our very own Moral, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Department is flourishing with preparations and activities to keep young

have a wider variety of activities to choose from. We're going to hopefully be able to plan trips to Atlantic City and Delaware."

This is not all that their planning thought. Softball, football and soccer are a few of the possible tournaments looked at being held. Another possibility are organized trips to National Football League (NFL) games.

"We'll be organizing out of town trips also," Jenkins said. "With transportation and tickets provided, all you'll have to do is purchase your ticket from MWR."

The base MWR facilities widen the range of trips available to Sailors. They also offer such

also allow Sailors to take advantage of the facilities at Scott Annex.

"Some of the facilities that will be available once we're there are the Single Sailor facility with computers and TVs, a three-story gym with ellipticals and treadmills, the barracks, the ITT office, a swimming pool, a Navy Exchange (NEX) and Commissary," ABFAN Andrew Murphy of Supply Division's S-7 said. "These are all located on or around the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. There's also a bowling alley right outside base with a bar, pool tables and good food. It's good entertainment for single sailors."

The base MWR also offers rentals. These include boats, campers, jet skis, fishing and camping equipment, and lawn and garden equipment.

With all the excitement, MWR is still planning on offering some of the same services available in Norfolk.

"We're planning out the routes for the MWR van once we get there," Murphy said. "We'll still be running the MWR shuttle back and forth from the barracks to the NEX, Waterside, and down to the beach. Also, we're going to still be doing the MWR calendar."

"Single Sailors have a lot to look forward to with the move to the shipyard," Murphy said. "With bingo, out of town trips, and poker tournaments, it will provide a wide arrangement of activities for everyone to do."



Mass Communication Specialist (SW/AW) Najah Stanford

Sailors active and entertained during this upcoming yard period.

"There will trips and organized sporting events," IT1(AW/SW) Johnny Jenkins of Supply Department's S-7 said. "We'll be working with the base MWR facility, so between the two, the Sailors will

trips as kayaking, skydiving, white water rafting and parachuting.

Everyone onboard the ship will be eligible for these trips," Jenkins said. "For some, you're eligible to bring your dependents."

Being Norfolk Naval Shipyard will

GW Sailors Boost Morale through Command Sports Day

By MC1(SW) Rebecca A. Perron

USS George Washington Sailors participated in a Command Sports Day at Fleet Recreation Park Aug. 1 to boost morale through the camaraderie of sporting events, such as baseball, kickball, dodge ball, volleyball and soccer.

Sailors also listened to music provided by a DJ and ate a picnic-style lunch, including hamburgers, hotdogs and chips, while getting to relax and talk to co-workers.

The high temperature was not a deterrent for those participating, as Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) provided plenty of bottled water, water guns, water balloons and snow cones to help keep everyone cool and safe.

"I think this is a great outing," said IT1(SW/AW) Johnny Jenkins, MWR's leading petty officer. "I'm happy to see so many people on such a hot day. Everyone seems to be having lots of fun. This is the first time since the yard period we've been able to do something like this."

For many Sailors, the sports day was not just an opportunity to get out of the office and relax, but also an opportunity to build teamwork.

"This is a great way for sports to build teamwork," said IC3 Brian Sidhu of Combat System's CS9 Division. "You learn to rely on one another. You get out here, the sun's shining and music's playing. You come to see, 'hey, these people are good people.' Once you take that attitude back to the ship, it's helps."

"Today has been outstanding," Jenkins said. "It's been a big success. It's been better than what we thought it would be."



GW Holds Earning a College Degree Workshop

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Laura Rabe

USS George Washington recently held a workshop to help prepare sailors who are interested in going to college.

The goal of the workshop was to answer basic questions Sailors had and give them a clearer understanding of the process of earning a degree.

"I was motivated to teach this class tonight, because when I first started working on my degree, I had no idea what I was doing," ET1(SW/AW) Donald Britt of Supply's RC Division said. "I had a lot of question to ask, but mainly it

assistance (TA), choosing colleges and how to go about doing it, different degree programs, the importance of the Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and how to get the most bang for your buck as far as your rate training and work experience you received while in the Navy.

"I think people got a lot of information out of my class," Britt said, "even if it was just what form to fill out or the process to filling things out. I know there were a few

individuals who were just like I was when I first started out. They had no idea where to begin, no clue what they wanted to do, or what they were suppose to do. I think now a lot of people have more of a direction as to what they want to do.

In today's world, getting a college degree is important for young Sailors to make them competitive for advancement and in the civilian job market.

"I think getting a degree is important for a couple of different reasons," Britt said. "First off, the Navy is switching over to a more professional structure. They're going to require



Mass Communication Specialist Laura Rabe

was the questions I didn't know to ask. I felt if I passed on some of this information, it could probably expedite some people getting their degrees. The class could help them out a lot, because then they don't have to worry about feeling dumb or worrying about what questions to ask."

"I came tonight because I want to get my Associate's then work on my Bachelor's," SK3(SW/AW) Lowell Manis of Supply's S-6 Division said. "I think getting a degree is important, just to be able to provide for my family after I finish my career in the Navy, whether I stay in for 20 or get out after four. I learned in the class tonight how to get started and good information on who to call. I got a lot of good information tonight, I'm really glad I came."

In the class, topics were discussed such as tuition

individuals to have degrees in order to make rate. Also, it's a good thing to have when you get out of the Navy. Everyone is going to get out of the Navy eventually; a degree is a good think to fall back on. Having a degree, even an Associate's Degree, shows an employer that you're motivated and responsible, that you can follow a task all the way to the end."

"I think ET1 Britt did a very good job," said Manis.

"For the Sailors who did not come tonight, if they're interested, it's never too late to start on your degree," Britt added. "We're going to have one heck of an opportunity when we go into the shipyards to get a lot of college knocked out. You can call me any time of you would like to schedule the class for your division or a group of people."

GW Tests New Damage Control Training

By Mass Communication Specialist Second Class (SW/AW) Jennifer Crowell

USS *George Washington* is taking another step ensuring Sailors are combat ready. *GW*'s Damage Control Division is implementing a new training program designed to help crewmembers earn their damage control qualifications.

"Right now we have a general lack of training on board for damage

control," said Lt. Cmdr. Jorge Flores, *GW*'s Damage Control Assistant. "We're trying to implement some really good training for both the basic and advanced DC, so people have the ability to put their hands on things."

The ultimate goal is to make sure every crewmember obtains a diverse foundation in damage control training.

"The class is great," said ABHAN Shennitta Haile of Air Department's V-0 Division. "The fact we went out onto the fantail and were actually doing things helped me understand more. The instructor was showing us how to do it, and we were learning better that

way."

It is important every crewmember know how to respond to, react to and be able to assist with any damage on board. Completing qualifications properly and with hands-on experience is the best way for the crew to know damage control.

"The damage control tests that are coming out are becoming harder and more intense," said DC3(SW) Abdullah Dadali of DC Division. There's some information you're not going to be able to find in just the lessons. You're going to have to look in other references, but we will give you all the materials necessary to find them."

Classes are being held twice each day during the underway, beginning with Basic DC at 8 a.m. and Advanced DC at 1 p.m. in the Educational Services Office classroom at 03-29-2-L.

"These lessons are designed to help train the crew," Dadali said. "We need the crew's input on what we're training with. We need to know what they're lacking on, what they're least experienced with."



Mass Communication Specialist Second Class (SW/AW) Jennifer Crowell

GW Hosts Digital Flight Control Systems Testing

By MC2(SW/AW) Jennifer Crowell

USS *George Washington* is assisting Air Test Evaluation Squadron 23 (VX-23) as the ship serves as the test platform for the new digital flight control system. This trial marks the first time the system has been tested in a shipboard environment.

"The DFCS is an upgrade in the EA-6B *Prowler*, replacing an old analog system," said Lt. Nick Green, officer in charge for VX 23. "The system does math for the pilot, making the aircraft a little bit easier to fly. The old system is prone to mechanical failures, command and control inputs that are causing safety and reliability issues."

"The old system was just an old analog-type system that had some maintenance problems and less reliability than the fleet was hoping for," said Andy Krohn, a flight test engineer for VX 23. "The new system upgrades that, as well as improves flying qualities for approaches and provides less maintenance on the flight control system. There's less work load on the pilot."

Although the system faces its first trial at sea, the DFCS has survived the rigors of undergoing laboratory research before heading to the runway.

"We have airspace over the Chesapeake Bay where we do up and away flight tests and you 'clean wing,' cleaning tanks and other objects from beneath the wings, and they're out flying and making sure everything behaves the same way," Green said. "Then at the field, there we have two intercepting runways as a build-up to what we have here. During the approach handling passes, we intentionally offset to the right, left, to see how we do trying to correct back to normal."

After successfully completing the runway phases of experimentation, pilots head to sea.

"We also have a ship-based landing system at the base," Green explained. "We have the same arresting gear and catapults that are on the ship."

"We want to make sure the system can handle the stress and still keep it working."

Now that the system is being tested in an actual shipboard environment, the testing will conclude with analysis on board *GW* and in Maryland, followed by a systems check before heading to the fleet early next fiscal year.



Engineer Rates Prepare for Merger to RT

By Mass Communication Specialist Second Class (SW/AW) Jennifer Crowell

USS George Washington's Engineering Department is preparing for the upcoming rating merger for Damage Controlmen, Hull Technicians and Machinery Repairmen. The three rates will merge into a new rate- Repair Technicians (RTs).

Although the Navy has indicated the merger will happen, there is no set timeline. "The rate merger is officially unofficial," said HTCS(SW/AW) Douglas Fisher, R Division's leading chief petty officer. "We know it's pending, but we don't know when."

While merging the MR rating with HT and DC, the merger marks the second time HT and DC become a single rate.

"Hull tech and damage control were split from HTs in the 80s," said Fisher.

"Everybody was a hull tech originally. During the buildup for the 600 ship Navy during the Reagan years, we split the rate, and many people went damage control, while a lot of people went hull tech."

Sailors in Engineering Department's Repair Division have already started preparing for the merge by cross training

"The MRs and HTs work in separate shops," said MR2(SW) William Neault. "We've been swapping guys back and forth for a lot of on-the-job training."

"Within my division, it's fairly easy, because I have hull techs and machinery repairmen," Fischer said. "I have been cross training a group of folks for a long time. I have MRs doing hull techs jobs and vice versa."

"I enjoy doing

mechanical stuff, working with my hands," said HT2(SW) Jeremy Russell of the Carpenter Shop. "I think it'll open another side of the work for us and give us a chance to do more and see more."

"It's going to be a hard change for the people who are going to have to cross train are going to have to learn new things," said HT1(SW/AW) Thomas Kempf, R Division's leading petty officer. "It's going to be an interesting transition for them, but ultimately it's going to make them much more marketable on the outside world once they do get out."

"I think the rate merger will be a positive thing for the Navy," Fisher said. "In the era of doing more with less, this is



definitely a good streamlining move. "I think it would be good going toward the goal of more education with less people so you'll have a better educated Sailor and be able to man a ship with less people."

Virginia State Trooper Gives Safety Speech to GW Crew

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman David Bach

A Virginia state police officer stopped by USS *George Washington* to speak to the crew about a variety of safety topics, including driving under the influence (DUI), people who have out of state license plates, street racing and Virginia state laws in general.

State Trooper Mark Walden retired from the military three years ago in 2003 after serving 20 years in the Navy. After a successful Naval career in which he retired as BM1 (SW/AW) Mark Walden, he attended an eight month-long police academy and has been giving speeches like this ever since. Including, flying on the ship several times.

"I am here because I want to send out a message, even though I am retired, I am still a Sailor at heart," Walden said, "and I will always look out for my Sailors and Marines. If I could just get one person to listen to me and that changes that person's life, then I did what I had to do."

"We want the crew to know what dangers are out there and things that they should be aware of," said ABH1 (AW) Marcus Hall from Safety. "We expect those Sailors to pay attention and maybe take something home with them and realize, hey, what they are doing out there if their breaking the law, speeding or anything like that, that they shouldn't be doing it and what could happen to them."

Safety Department played a big role in planning and getting Walden on board the ship. Hall was the main coordinator of this event.

"To get State Trooper Walden on board, it took a lot of work

on my part, a lot of e-mailing back and forth," Hall commented. "I didn't have a clue of where to start from the beginning, but I was able to secure someone there at the Virginia state police office and talk to them for a few back and forth through e mail and we where able to get this guy out here."

Walden addressed the crew in Hanger Bay 2. Any Sailor 26 and under was required to attend, but everyone on board was encouraged to attend.

"My goal during this visit is to get people to listen to me, understand where I am coming from," Walden explained. "For them to listen to my experience, from where I came from, to where I am at now in the law position. I am not coming here just talking from a book; I am talking from past experience and things that could have made my life a lot worse."

This event was held with that fact that Labor Day weekend is coming upon us and just to educate everyone.

"It's going to be the Labor Day weekend, so what do we do? We go out have a good time, barbecuing, hot dogs, hamburgers and all that good stuff," Hall said. "Also there are parties and people are traveling on the highways, and this coincides with what State Trooper Walden is talking about."

"I hope the *George Washington* crew really gets a lot out of this guy coming out," Hall added. "He volunteered to come do this here, and I really appreciate him doing this for us. I just want to let everybody out there know that the state trooper is out there watching you, yes, he is on our team, but at the same time he has a job to do."

